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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 300811Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0353
INFO RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 5418
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 5425
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 8051
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 8575
RUEHKS/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 6602
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC 8217
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 001693

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AIAG AMBASSADOR LANGE
DEPT FOR OES/IHA SINGER AND FENDRICK
DEPT FOR EAP/J
USDA PASS TO APHIS
HHS PASS TO CDC
HHS FOR OGHA STEIGER, BHAT AND ELVANDER

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [KSTH](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [WHO](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA: JAPAN WEEKLY REPORT MARCH 30

REF: A. 05 STATE 153802
[1](#)B. TOKYO 1529 AND PREVIOUS
[1](#)C. TOKYO 1613
[1](#)D. TOKYO 163

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[1](#)1. (U) The following is an update on avian influenza (AI) developments in Japan for the period March 23 to March 30. No human or animal outbreaks of H5N1 avian influenza were reported in Japan during the past week.

-- Tokyo Decides on Details for AI Assistance --

[1](#)2. (U) The GOJ recently decided how it would disburse the USD 155 million plus pledged by Tokyo at last year's ASEAN Plus Three Summit and January's Beijing AI Donors' Conference to support regional and worldwide efforts to fight avian and pandemic influenza. The assistance will be used to procure antiviral medications, personal protective equipment, and diagnostic kits for ASEAN members, and will fund a variety of projects targeting human and animal health, risk communications, and research projects. Please see REF C for full details.

- Kyoto-area University to Establish AI Research Center -

[1](#)3. (U) On March 28, Kyoto Sangyo University announced that it would establish a research center for avian influenza later this October. Koichi Ohtsuki, currently a professor of veterinary microbiology at Tottori University, will head the center. Researchers will focus on the mechanisms of infection and conduct epidemiological research to prevent the introduction of new viruses into Japan. Kyoto Sangyo University will establish a preparatory office to begin work on the new center on April 1. The university is located in Kyoto City.

-- University in Western Japan Builds BSL-3 Lab --

[1](#)4. (U) Tottori University completed construction of a biosafety level three (BSL-3) laboratory to allow for

research on human and animal infectious diseases transmitted through birds at its epidemiological research center in Tottori Prefecture. This is the first BSL-3 lab to be located at any university in the western region of Honshu (the largest of the four main islands in Japan). The lab will open for operations on April 1. Research teams at the university plan to breed up to a maximum of 40 chickens at the lab to conduct research on virus mutation. The university will investigate which kinds of viruses mutate easily into other forms during bird-to-bird transmission.

15. (SBU) The local politics surrounding BSL-3 and BSL-4 labs in Japan is often similar to that surrounding nuclear facilities - namely safety concerns that lead to a "not in my backyard" mindset. In order to ensure that the local public understood the facility was safe, Tottori University hosted an open house on March 25 and invited 30 area residents to explain to them what kinds of safety measures would be implemented at the laboratory. These included talking about negative air pressure to ensure that pathogens are not released outside the lab, rules on disposing equipment and gear, and sterilization protocols for non-disposable items.

-- Prefectures Unite to Respond to Potential Crises --

16. (U) In response to the recent outbreaks of avian influenza across the globe, nine prefectures including Osaka, Kyoto, Hyogo, Wakayama, Nara, Shiga, Fukui, Mie and Tokushima decided to conclude a comprehensive agreement on mutual crisis management support on March 28. This agreement is the first of its kind, and covers all potential crises in addition to natural disasters, such as terrorist attacks. Based on the agreement, the prefectures will accept evacuees from their surrounding neighbors and

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provide them with necessary aid.

-- Industry Representative Doubts GOJ Efforts --

17. (SBU) ESToff and EST FSN met with Jiro Fukuda (strictly protect), Manager of Nisshinbo Industries, Inc.'s GAIACOT project, to receive an update on the development of the company's new copper zeolite facemask. As reported in REF D, Nisshinbo's studies show that the mask may be effective in protecting the wearer from infection by the avian influenza virus because it is able to inactivate 99.9 percent of the H9N2 virus after ten minutes of contact. Fukuda admitted that some test results showed that the mask worked even faster in the range of one to two minutes, but that to be on the safe side, Nisshinbo was using ten minutes as the figure in its research reporting.

18. (SBU) Nisshinbo has started to sell the masks to individual customers by mail order. However, because the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) has not yet approved the mask for use, the manufacturer had to remove all references to avian influenza from the product packaging. Fukuda also said that his company had to change the name of the product because earlier media reports had directly linked GAIACOT with its AI fighting properties.

19. (SBU) Nisshinbo also plans to produce an air filter and a floor mat for use in poultry farms and to manufacture clothes for poultry industry workers made from a zeolite-based material. Fukuda told ESToff that he felt the GOJ's efforts to prevent the spread of avian influenza were not enough, and that government agencies were not providing sufficient guidance to industry in preparation for a possible pandemic. He said MHLW and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) are focusing only on surveillance and planning for the actions to be taken after an outbreak, but they are not approaching companies to proactively use their R&D capabilities to

prepare well in advance of an AI outbreak in Japan.

DONOVAN